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REMARKS

In the office Action dated April 2, 2003, claims 9-18 are pending, claims 9, 13-15, 17 and 18 are rejected, and objection is made to claims 10-12 and 16. Applicants appreciate the acknowledgement of patentable subject matter.

Claims 10 and 16 are presented in independent form; the term "lower region" also was amended to read "lower leg region" in line 4. Thus, claims 10-12 and 16 are allowable.

Claim 9 also has been amended to more particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter regarded as invention. Entry of the amendment to claim 9 is requested.

Claims 9, 13, 15, 17 and 18 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) over US 5,994,760 (Christensen) and claims 9 and 14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over US 5,116,384 (Wilson et al.).

As already pointed out in our previous response, neither Christensen nor Wilson et al teach or suggest a tension element corresponding to the tension element of the present invention.

The Examiner acknowledges the difference between the present invention and the prior art. However, the Examiner holds the opinion that this difference is not expressed sufficiently by the term "tension element" and requires a further description. Applicants have amended claim 9 to recite that the tension element is structured and arranged to be able to transmit only a tension force between its one end and its other end.

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Applicants submit that this added description distinguishes the present invention from the cited references.


Further regarding Wilson et al., the Examiner contends that the solid pylon (28) disclosed by Wilson can be regarded as a spring element. Applicants strongly disagree. The Examiner's contention is contrary to any reasonable consideration of the structure of a solid pylon by one of ordinary skill in the art. In addition, Wilson also ***fails*** to teach or suggest the tension element as claimed herein.

In view of the amendment and discussion above, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance. An early reconsideration and notice of allowance are earnestly solicited.

Applicants believe that additional fees are not required in connection with the consideration of the within matter. However, if for any reason a fee is required, a fee paid is inadequate or credit is owed for any excess fee paid, you are hereby authorized and requested to charge Deposit Account No. **04-1105**.

Respectfully submitted,

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